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SOCIALISM IN GERMANY.

BY OSWALD OTTENDORFER.

NO INTELLIGENT observer of events will deny the importance of the so-called "Social Question." In the literature of nearly every nation that participates in the progress of the race, in books of fiction, in treatises and essays, in periodicals and scientific works, it is discussed with more or less talent and ingenuity, and such publications find large numbers of eager readers.

Even the legislative bodies of many civilized nations spend much time in preparing laws for the repression of the excesses of socialism, or to remedy some of the most glaring evils which seem to have their source in the development of modern industry.

It is not difficult to detect the cause of this. Since the origin of mankind there has been no period of equal, or even longer, duration in which the production of wealth made such immense progress as during the present century. This is, no doubt, due to the numerous inventions by which space and time have been nearly annihilated, forces multiplied a hundredfold, and nature made subservient to human enterprise.

But these inventions would not have been made, or, at least, would not have been introduced to such an extent, if knowledge and intelligence among mankind had not been diffused in a greater degree during the present century than during any previous period. It required not only the invention of steam power, but the coöperation of millions of intelligent heads, to build the present immense system of railroads and steamships; and they would not be operated in so perfect and systematic a manner if the wants of the human race had not increased immensely, and if the millions of intelligent heads were not compelled to exert themselves in order to meet the increased needs of the people.

It is a fact proved by statistical researches that the standard of life of the present generation in all civilized countries is higher and better than it was a century ago, and that the story of the

“good old times” is a myth. Even the older men among us will remember that the mode of living among all classes of our population, their food, clothing, lodgings, etc., are much better to-day than they were in the days of their childhood.

Nevertheless, the discontent of a very large number of the people with their condition and prospects is evident to the most superficial observer, and the misery among some classes, especially in large and densely-populated cities, is appalling.

The solution of the seeming contradiction with the foregoing statement is to be found in the fact that, while the increase and diffusion of civilization and culture multiply the wants of the human race, these wants are at the same time the most potent incentives to increased production. The creator of the wants would, no doubt, be able to supply all the demands, and, in fact, does so (for it can be easily shown that the production of the necessities of life has increased more rapidly than the need for them); but the distribution of the products of human industry and skill is to a great extent independent of their production. It is, therefore, not the lack in the production of wealth that causes the prevailing discontent, but the imperfection in the distribution of it.

How far these defects are unavoidably connected with the system of our industrial development, which is the result of civilization, and has spread over the civilized world a degree of blessing never before witnessed in the history of mankind; how far they emanated from and are the consequences of laws, habits, and customs voluntarily enacted and adopted, it may be, with the laudable intention to promote the general welfare; how far the present system is the outgrowth of human nature, based upon laws of nature which it would be futile and useless to attempt to amend or to repeal; or how far the tendency of centralization (the most characteristic promoter of the progress of our days) can be considered responsible for the evils complained of, and how far this tendency can be modified or repressed without incurring the risk of losing all the benefits accompanying its unrestricted working—these and similar considerations are the contents of the social question, which occupy the minds of thousands of highly-cultivated men, and control the thoughts and feelings of millions of people.

It will be generally admitted that the social question affecting the welfare of the largest number of people of the civilized world

is the most important problem of our day, and the most difficult one to solve, as it may imply changes in the present organization of human society. No intelligent man who appreciates the far-reaching influence that the social question and its solution, or even any attempt to solve it, must have upon the development of civilization, can approach it without feeling the insufficiency of the human intellect, as it may be concentrated in any individual, to control and to master it.

Nevertheless there is no lack of social quack-doctors who recommend their medicine as a most reliable and never-failing remedy against all the evils with which human society is afflicted ; not to mention the demagogues who use the social question as a stepping-stone to satisfy their ambition, or the lower grades of their colleagues, who depict the defects of the present social organization and the misery of the world in the darkest possible colors, and throw out with full hands the seeds of discontent, expecting in the confusion created thereby to reap the fruits which they are too indolent to secure by industrial habits and energetic work. There are some men, highly intelligent and animated, no doubt, by the best intentions, who do not hesitate, in meditating on the social problem, to fly to the skies and to build air-castles, from which they proclaim full-fledged schemes, by the adoption of which they promise to remodel the present social order, and to make all mankind contented and happy.

These gentlemen should pause and reflect that the present state of social affairs, however imperfect, is the result of the evolution of civilization during many centuries—a result for the accomplishment of which the wisest men of all nations and all times have worked, and which could only be attained after numerous experiments, and with the sacrifice of many lives and much treasure.

Then it may dawn upon them that the much-desired and needed improvement in our social condition can only be achieved by the most extended and careful study of the whole field of sociology, and practically can only be tried step by step by numerous experiments, most of which may prove to be failures, but in some of which a grain of real merit may be detected, which is capable of further development and may finally bear fruit commensurate with the work bestowed on its cultivation. They may come to the conclusion that millions of intelligent heads and stout hearts must assiduously coöperate, if the practical

solution of only one part of the social problem is to be accomplished, and that those who undertake to cut the Gordian knot by an *arbiter dictum* will only retard the work they profess to promote, and may do more harm than good to the real interests of the masses, whose deplorable condition enlisted their sympathies.

From this point of view, the social movement in Germany, as it is shaping at present, richly deserves the interest so generally taken in it ; the government there, or, rather, the Emperor, not only having recognized the necessity of social reforms, but taken measures for their realization.

The social agitation in Germany commenced about the same time as in the other countries in Europe, though confined, up to the consolidation of the German Empire, mostly to secret propaganda by the circulation of pamphlets and tracts through private agents who knew how to elude the vigilance of the police. Since the formation of the empire and the adoption of universal suffrage as the basis upon which the deputies to Parliament are elected, the Socialists have become encouraged to send their own representatives to the highest law-making body of the country. Many of their companions, however, misled by former conspiracies, could not rise to the position of battling for the recognition of their opinions and demands by the use of the legal means that were at their disposal. Some of them became helpless tools of communistic and anarchistic agitators, whom they assisted in putting their schemes of vengeance against society into execution. This brought them in conflict with the criminal courts, and landed a few in the penitentiaries and even on the gibbet.

The Socialists, it is true, did not approve of these crimes, but their official organs did not condemn them, and it is, therefore, not surprising that indignant public opinion held them to some extent responsible for these outrages. The attempts upon the life of Emperor William I. in 1878, and the severe measures of repression which were then resorted to, led to the expulsion of the most active socialistic leaders. Their organization, though severely shaken thereby, was not broken up, and in 1884 they succeeded in electing twenty-five of their representatives to the Reichstag. It is true that this number shrank to eleven in 1887, but the election of the later year cannot be considered as an expression of the popular will, as it was held under the pressure of impending danger of war, and the government made every pos-

sible effort to secure a majority that would approve the proposed large increase of the army for the following seven years. In the meanwhile, socialism, or, rather, the recognition of the necessity of effecting social reforms, had made converts among the highest classes of society, among whom Emperor William I. occupied the most conspicuous place. In the message which he transmitted to the Reichstag on November 17, 1881, he said :

"Already last February we made our conviction known that the cure of social evils could not be accomplished exclusively by the repression of the social-democratic excesses, but simultaneously by positive measures tending to promote the welfare of the workingmen." And after announcing the drafts of the law relating to the organization of an accident insurance for the workingmen, and to provide for their support in case of sickness, the Emperor continued : "We consider it our duty to recommend this subject to the earnest consideration of the Reichstag, and we would look back with great satisfaction to the success which God has vouchsafed our régime if we could take the consciousness with us that we have left to the Vaterland new and durable guarantees for internal peace, and to the poor and needy the better security and assistance to which they were entitled."

The legislative drafts alluded to in the message were thoroughly discussed, and not only was the path struck out by the government in the direction of socialism looked upon as very questionable, but the difficulties in the way of the practical execution of the measures recommended were so great that they were not adopted before 1884, and then only with considerable amendments.

But, apart from this, the social movement received a new impetus through the sympathy of the Emperor, and, as it was deemed impolitic to sail under the flag of socialism pure and simple, the new school of state socialism was established, which obtained numerous adherents among the best-educated classes, especially among men who had become distinguished by their theoretical, incisive treatment of the various subjects they had applied themselves to, but who, it must be confessed, betrayed an equal lack of practical experience—university professors, etc.

The assumption, occasionally heard, that the attempts upon the Emperor's life led him to the recognition of the need of social reform appears unfounded ; but nevertheless the statistical exhibit of the forced sales, during one year, of the land of the poor people by the fiscal agent of the state for the collection of unpaid taxes, made a deep impression upon the aged monarch, and his sympathies with the misfortunes of the poor were roused thereby.

Prince Bismarck does not seem to have had great sympathy with the socialistic inclinations of the Emperor, though he did not

make the slightest effort to hinder or frustrate them. As a faithful servant of his master, for whom to die, as he repeatedly declared, would be the height of his ambition, he did not interfere in the least with the hobby of the old man, especially as he had not the faintest conception of the extent, if not of the measures, at least of the principle from which they emanated. Bismarck, on the whole, is by no means the genius in questions of political economy and state financing that he proved to be as the arbiter of and leader in political questions, especially those which called for the highest statesmanship ; in reality he displayed in his judgment of the measures of political economy which came up in the discussions concerning the raising of the protective tariff, especially the duties on breadstuffs, a naïveté which borders on the humorous.

This is not at all surprising, because he is not such a universal genius that he can instinctively hit the mark straight in every question ; and as he had to concentrate the entire force of his powerful mind upon objects that are foreign to these questions, it is not strange that he does not betray in their treatment either practical experience or theoretical study.

At the assumption of government by the present Emperor in 1888, it was not to be expected that he would bring to bear a comprehension of social questions or any sympathy with them. After his accession to the throne he seemed to give his whole attention to the army ; nevertheless, events soon came up which probably enough turned his mind toward social reform. In Germany the government is the owner of nearly all the railways. The acquisition of the roads was forced upon the government on strategical grounds rather than from politico-economical considerations. It stands to reason that a country which is bordered on two sides by rival nations, and on its other borders by rather unreliable friends, must not only be prepared to have the army always ready to take the field, but must also be able to send it on short notice to any exposed point, and, so to say, to throw it within a few days from the north to the south, or from the east to the west. For this purpose it is indispensable to have the means of transportation—the railroads—under the unconditional control of the government, in order that it may determine the changes to be made not only in their improvement and extension, but also in the articles transported, so that it might effect such transportation as a threatened out-

break might call for. The running of railroads, however, requires, above everything, coals, and in reality an abundance of coals, so that the old proverb of the need of money, more money, and limitless money for the continuation of war should be altered in these days to read that a rich, inexhaustible supply of coals is an indispensable necessity.

The strike of coal-miners which broke out in 1888 in the coal regions of Germany might have first suggested to the Emperor the need of measures for the removal of dissatisfaction among that class of the laboring population. The warning thus afforded was emphasized by the strike which again broke out in those regions during the past year, which actually induced the Emperor to intervene personally, summoning the delegates of the laborers to appear before him in Berlin, and instructing the government officials in those regions to exert their influence for the adjudication of the points in question. One of these gentlemen, the president of the district government of Düsseldorf, Baron von Berlepsch, appears to have gained, by his successful efforts in that direction, the favor of the Emperor, so that he intrusted him a few months later with the portfolio of commerce, which Bismarck had held until then. The proprietors of the coal mines, partly private individuals, partly corporations, did not take kindly to the interference of the Emperor. They maintained that their workmen became more stubborn in consequence, and, in spite of all concessions, would be incited to make new demands, the concession of which would finally become irreconcilable with the successful carrying-on of their business. In the meanwhile, preparations were made for the new elections to the Reichstag, which were held on the 20th of February last. Suddenly, on the 4th of February, two proclamations of the Emperor were published. One was a rescript addressed to the Minister of Commerce and Trades, which orders the summoning of the Council of State to deliberate on measures for the amelioration of the condition of workingmen, and for the prevention of disturbances in the industrial works, especially in the coal mines. The Emperor says in that proclamation:

"Valuable and successful as the measures are for the amelioration of the conditions of the laboring classes which have thus far been initiated by legislation and administration, they do not come up fully to the task which I have assumed. The existing regulations of the trades, rules affecting the condition of workingmen in the factories, are to be examined into, in order to do justice to the complaints and demands that have been made in this field in so far as they are well founded. This

examination has to start from the point that it is one of the duties of government to regulate time, duration, and mode of work, so that the preservation of health, the demands of morality, the economical needs of the workingmen, and their claim of equality before the law, be vindicated. For the cultivation of peace between employers and employees legal enactments should be considered, in which the workingmen, by their representatives who possess their confidence, shall have an equal share in the regulation of affairs, and for the protection of their interests in negotiations with the employers and with the representatives of my government. By such an arrangement a free and peaceable presentation of their wishes and complaints is to be secured, and an opportunity is afforded to the state authorities to keep themselves informed of the condition of the workingmen and remain in intercourse with them. The state mines I wish, as far as care for the welfare of the workingmen is concerned, to be made model establishments, and for the private mining works I desire the cultivation of an organic relation of my mining officials with the miners. For the preliminary deliberation of these questions I will it that the Council of State meet under my presidency and in conjunction with such experts as will be designated. The selection of the latter I reserve for my personal disposal."

The other rescript addressed to the Chancellor, Prince Bismarck, charges him to extend invitations to France, England, Belgium, and Switzerland to send delegates to a conference in which measures for the amelioration of the condition of the workingmen were to be considered. In that rescript he says :

"I have resolved to offer my hand for the amelioration of the condition of German workingmen as far as the limits will permit within which I am confined by the care forced upon me by the necessity of maintaining our German industry in a condition to compete successfully in the world's market, and thereby secure its existence and that of the workingmen. The difficulties in the improvement of the condition of our workingmen, founded on international competition, may, perhaps, not be overcome entirely by an international agreement of the countries that rule the world's market, but they may be mitigated. Convinced that other governments are also animated by the desire to subject to a common examination the objects which have already formed the subject of international deliberation by the workingmen of those countries, it is my will that, primarily, France, England, Belgium, and Switzerland shall be asked officially by my representatives there whether their governments would be inclined to enter into negotiations with us in behalf of an international exchange of opinions on the expediency of meeting those needs and wishes of workingmen which in the strikes of the past years have come to the surface. As soon as the consent to the principle of my suggestion shall have been obtained, I charge you to invite the cabinets of all governments who take a like interest in the workingmen's question to a conference for deliberation of the questions involved."

These proclamations, immediately after their publication, received approval and acclamation at home and abroad. It was, however, soon found that the matter had also a serious aspect. The employers, and, indeed, the whole middle class of the people, were afraid that the open espousal by the Emperor of the workingmen's cause would encourage them to raise new demands that could not be complied with, and the workingmen, on the other side, were induced thereby to side with the Socialists, whose aims the Emperor had indorsed by the expression of his sympathies. The organizations of the Socialists were by no means satisfied

with the obscure, vapory promises ; they accepted with pleasure the increase to their ranks brought about by the attitude of the Emperor, but with one single exception* gave no sign of relinquishing their opposition to the government. The influence upon the elections was not to be wondered at and could be easily foreseen. It led to a crushing defeat of those parties that supported the government in the last chamber, the Conservatives, the Liberal-Conservatives, and National Liberals, and their numerical decrease turned to the advantage of the Socialists and Radicals (Freisinnige). The former will number in the new body 35 and the Radicals 72, which will give them (aside from the fact that, with the exception of a few minor questions, they never coalesced) in the Reichstag, which is composed of 397 members, but a very moderate influence. The power will rest in the votes of the Centrum, the Clericals, who, with the remnant of

* At a meeting of Socialists on the 6th of March, presided over by ex-Deputy von Vollmar (Munich), he declared that he and his party cannot but be greatly pleased by the turn that has been given to the labor questions by the Emperor. The ideas of the Emperor are in perfect agreement with the wishes of the workingmen. As the latter seem now likely to become realized, it is absolutely necessary to have as many Social Democrats as possible elected to the Reichstag.

The increase of the socialist vote in the German cities is as follows :

	1884.	1887.	1890.
Berlin I.....	821	2,176	3,586
“ II.....	9,282	14,751	19,339
“ III.....	6,344	9,088	12,278
“ IV.....	25,386	32,064	40,521
“ V.....	2,444	4,803	7,332
“ VI.....	21,258	30,453	42,394
Hamburg I.....	12,282	15,497	17,031
“ II.....	14,306	18,672	22,093
“ III.....	10,922	17,803	27,250
Breslau I.....	6,019	7,781	9,996
“ II.....	6,221	8,032	11,404
Munich I.....	3,462	4,563	7,539
“ II.....	6,399	11,332	17,717
Dresden I.....	6,514	6,942	11,054
“ II.....	8,620	9,175	13,427
Leipzig.....	9,676	10,087	12,921
Cologne.....	4,151	4,952	10,688
Magdeburg.....	8,112	11,438	17,256
Frankfort-on-the-Main.....	7,965	8,640	12,653
Königsberg.....	4,351	7,987	12,300
Hanover.....	8,839	12,210	15,752
Stuttgart.....	3,346	4,496	10,372
Bremen.....	4,880	7,743	14,843
Düsseldorf.....	1,048	2,933	7,502
Nuremberg.....	12,582	14,857	16,809
Danzic.....	577	2,279	3,525
Strasburg.....	9	103	4,770
Chemnitz.....	14,413	15,356	24,192
Elberfeld-Barmen.....	13,031	15,655	18,094
Altona.....	10,770	15,120	18,240
Stettin.....	1,139	4,276	7,761
Aix.....	864	905	1,744
Crefeld.....	1,181	1,917	3,025
Brunswick.....	6,764	10,659	12,804
Halle.....	3,585	6,590	12,390
Lübeck.....	2,482	4,254	6,258

the former supporters of the government, will form a bare majority, whose support the government will have to obtain by making concessions to the demands of the Catholics. The strength of the Socialists in the new Reichstag is, therefore, in spite of the considerable increase which they secured so far, of no importance. More significant is the increased vote given for them in all larger German cities. (See table on page 488.) In some of the cities like Hamburg and Bremen they have elected all their candidates. This shows that the increase in the number of votes of the Socialists is principally due to the position the Emperor took in his proclamation in relation to the social question. Wherever the pulsation of news and of thoughts generated by it is the quickest, there the effect was the greatest, and it is probable that, should the elections take place to-morrow, the number of the Socialistic votes would show a similar increase, as appears from a comparison of the results of the elections of 1887 and 1890. The State Socialists have no party organization, and, therefore, no representatives. The government party has until now supported the measures advocated by the State Socialists.

The social problem will not be brought nearer solution either by the proclamation of the Emperor or the result of the recent elections. The conference of the delegates of the various powers, now being held in Berlin, will presumably accomplish no results, and we may hardly expect an agreement on any of the questions that will be brought before it; nor will the Council of State, in whose deliberations the Emperor takes part and over which he presides, produce any tangible fruits. Nevertheless, the efforts of the Emperor to influence the solution of the social problem from above will not be altogether barren of results. They certainly direct public attention in a high degree to the importance of the question, and may be a new contribution toward demonstrating the fruitlessness—nay, foolishness—of trying to solve the social problem by dictates from above or below, by arbitrary interferences, instead of leaving it to the evolution of civilization. The attitude of the Emperor on this question does all honor to his heart, but shows his wisdom and his experience in a poor light.

The lessons to be derived from these events will not show a positive gain, but a negative result—“How not to do it.”

OSWALD OTTENDORFER.